

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

26TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 20, 2002

BROOME COUNTY AWARDED \$50,000 FOR MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS

BINGHAMTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-26) today announced that the Broome County Health Department has been awarded a \$50,000 grant by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The grant was among the first awarded under the new Medical Reserve Corps initiative.

"One thing that has become very clear to me since September 2001 is that our communities need assistance from the federal government in order to be more fully prepared for large-scale emergencies," said Hinchey. "I commend Broome County for taking advantage of this new federal program. This grant will be a big help, but more federal assistance is needed. I will continue to fight to see that it is delivered."

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, Hinchey has held meetings with numerous representatives of emergency response agencies and municipalities throughout New York's 26th congressional district. Through these meetings and a survey he circulated, it became clear that most municipalities have comprehensive plans to deal with emergencies, but lack the resources to fully implement their plans. Hinchey supports a larger program of federal grants made directly to local entities.

In July, HHS announced the availability of \$2 million in grants to help local officials develop volunteer Medical Reserve Corps units to strengthen local communities' capacity to respond to an emergency and to strengthen the local public health infrastructure. Medical Reserve Corps units will be composed of community-led, community-based volunteers who may assist medical response professionals and facilities during large-scale local emergencies, such as naturally occurring influenza epidemics, hazardous materials spills or acts of terrorism. Volunteers can include, but are not limited to, current or retired health professionals, social workers, communications/public relations professionals, health care administrators and clergy, among others.

"This grant offers the opportunity to draw health professionals into volunteer service, create a framework to match volunteers' skills with community needs, and enhance local public health/emergency response efforts through the provision of reserve capacity," said Broome County Public Health Director Claudia Edwards. "This is an exciting opportunity for Broome County and will assist with our bioterrorism planning efforts."